

PZ 3

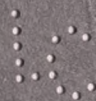
.H1968

D

COPY 1

DR. WHITTY'S PATIENT
AND MRS. CHALLMER'S
PUBLIC MEETING

BY
G. A. BIRMINGHAM



HODDER & STOUGHTON
NEW YORK
GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

James Owen Hannay

DR. WHITTY'S PATIENT
AND MRS. CHALLMER'S
PUBLIC MEETING

BY

G. A. BIRMINGHAM *[pseud.]*



HODDER & STOUGHTON
NEW YORK
GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

P. 23
H. 1968

Copyright, 1912

BY GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY



© Cl. A328482

201

H.B. 26 Nov. 1912

DR. WHITTY'S PATIENT

"**I** CALLED on you this morning," said Dr. Whitty, "about a purely personal matter. But perhaps you're busy?"

"I'm thankful to say," said Colonel Beresford, "that I'm past the age at which men think they can preserve their self-respect only by being busy."

"It has occurred to me," said Dr. Whitty, "since I got engaged to be married to Miss Mulhall, that, though my income is all right for the quiet kind of life we intend to lead, I haven't got the amount of capital ready to hand that I ought to have, if we are to go on a proper honeymoon."

"Some men," said the Colonel, "would have thought of that before they got engaged."

Dr. Whitty ignored this remark.

"It seems to me, therefore," he went on, "that it's my duty to get a hold on some ready money. I'm sure I can count on your help."

"If you expect me to become a chronic invalid or poison my servants ——"

"Not at all. The idea in my mind ——"

"I once offered you a present of twenty pounds," said the Colonel, "and you practically threw the cheque back in my face."

"I'm not begging," said Dr. Whitty; "all I want of you is your name as a reference."

"What for?"

"I'm thinking of starting a sanatorium. Hold on a minute — here's the advertisement: 'Nervous Patients' — that, of course, means habitual drunkards; it's put in that way to save unpleasantness for their relatives — 'received in a doctor's house. Bracing neighbourhood. Gravel soil. Personal supervision.

References kindly permitted to ——' Then comes your name, and, after it, Father Henaghan's and Mr. Jackson's. I have them both, so as to show that the religion of the patient will be properly attended to, whatever sort it is."

"And what do you expect to make out of that?"

"I shall ask £10 a week," said the doctor, "and, if I light on the right kind of drunkard, I dare say I shall get it."

"Is there much choice? I should have thought they were all rather disgusting."

"There is a choice, of course. The best kind is a young man whose father has made a large fortune honestly and so clings to the idea of respectability. The son, having been educated expensively, gets into what is supposed to be good society. There, he acquires habits which —— Well, the father, after doing his best for a time, determines to put the young man under control in some rather distant place. That's the really strong point about my advertisement. If you live in the English Midlands, as the man I have in mind almost certainly does, nowhere seems further off than Western Connacht. I shall get my £10 a week to a certainty if I have the luck to light on a man of that sort."

"I dare say you will," said Colonel Beresford. "I'm told that advertising is the one sure means of making money; and your effort is no more immoral than the rest."

"I'm not quite sure," said Dr. Whitty, "that I understand what you mean. Where does the immorality come in?"

"Well, advertisements, as a rule, lie like Ananias and Sapphira. Yours, for instance, says 'Bracing neighbourhood.'"

"That's not a lie. It's simply a formula, like 'Dear Sir' at the beginning of a letter."

“‘Gravel soil,’ then, is like ‘very sincerely yours’?”

“Precisely, and the rest of the advertisement is true.”

“Considering,” said the Colonel, “that every shop in Ballintra except one is a public-house, it seems to me it would have been wiser to have aimed at some other kind of patient.”

“I might have done that, of course; but a drunkard is much the most likely sort to get.”

“He’ll need a good deal of ‘Personal supervision,’” said the Colonel.

“I don’t mean to be the person who supervises. I couldn’t spare the time.”

“Ah! You mean to engage a sort of keeper.”

“Certainly not. In the first place, those fellows are frightfully expensive and I’m trying to make money. In the next place, men of that sort irritate the patient. What I mean to do is to hire Michael Geraghty’s little girl, the eldest one, Molly, who is about fourteen. I can get her for five shillings a week and she’ll find the greatest pleasure in walking round with the drunkard.”

“But she won’t be able to stop him drinking.”

“Oh, yes, she will. You may not have observed it, Colonel, but men who drink are invariably kind-hearted and fond of children. Molly will appeal to his better nature. That’s part of my system. No man would touch more than he ought while a nice little girl was holding him by the hand.”

Ten days later, Colonel Beresford received a letter marked “Private and confidential.”

“Dear Sir,” he read, “you will, I feel sure, excuse my troubling you, when I mention that I write to make enquiries about the character and position of Dr. Whitty of your own, whose advertisement gives your name among others as a reference. I am particularly

anxious to know whether Dr. Whitty is a man of cheerful disposition. It has become necessary, in consequence of a serious nervous breakdown, to secure for my son a period of complete rest and quiet. I think it desirable that he should be under the supervision of a competent medical man, although I trust he will not require actual treatment, and it is absolutely necessary that his surroundings should be bright and cheerful. I shall feel obliged if you will give me your candid opinion of Dr. Whitty, and I shall regard anything you write as strictly confidential.—I am, yours truly, J. Hatfield.”

The notepaper bore the name of a firm, “Hatfield & Co., Engineers and Contractors,” with a business address; but this was scratched out and “Cedar Lawn, Edenberry, Newcastle-on-Tyne,” substituted.

Colonel Beresford replied cautiously. He said he held the highest opinion of Dr. Whitty's personal character and medical skill, absolutely guaranteed his gaiety and gave it as his opinion that rest and quiet would be obtainable in Ballintra if anywhere in the world. He added, that he did not in any way vouch for the value of Dr. Whitty's methods of dealing with nervous patients. Three days later, he received a call from Dr. Whitty.

“Thanks, Colonel,” he said. “Your letter did the trick for me. Old Hatfield is evidently a British merchant of the most superior possible kind. He offered — actually offered — eight guineas a week, and his son is just the kind of man I want.”

“Nervous breakdown?” asked the Colonel.

“Precisely. The old boy was frightfully nice about it. You could see at once that he is really fond of Herbert — Herbert is the son's name.”

“Of course,” said the Colonel. “It was sure to be.”

“He wrote me a long letter and put the whole thing

down to Herbert's artistic temperament and the nerve strain which that involved. It appears that he did uncommonly well at Oxford — Herbert, I mean, not the engineer and contractor — and won a prize for writing poetry. Then he went up to London, and there, apparently, things began to get serious, though they'd evidently been bad enough at Oxford, and old Hatfield connects the trouble in some way with the prize poem. Herbert himself is quite willing to try the experiment of placing himself under my care for awhile. He is, so his father says, a young man of very amiable disposition who makes friends wherever he goes. I expect he'll take to Molly Geraghty at once. I dare say I shall have him for as much as three months and at the end of that time ——”

He paused and was evidently engaged in multiplying eight guineas by thirteen, a sum difficult to do without a pencil and a piece of paper.

“You'll be in a position to marry,” said the Colonel.

“Yes,” said Dr. Whitty, when he had finished his sum, “I shall.”

A week later Herbert Hatfield arrived, and for some days Colonel Beresford saw nothing of the doctor. He felt a good deal of curiosity about the progress of the new cure for inebriety, and, meeting Michael Geraghty on the road, took the opportunity of trying to find out what was going on.

“I hear,” he said, “that Dr. Whitty has engaged your eldest girl as housemaid, Michael. How does she like it?”

“It isn't housemaid she is,” said Michael, “nor yet cook.”

“What is she, then?”

“I wouldn't wonder,” said Michael, “if she's what they call a companion. Anyway, all she has to do is to walk about along with a strange gentleman the

doctor has with him, and for that she's getting five shillings a week and her dinner."

"It sounds an easy job."

"You may say that."

"And is he a nice gentleman?"

"As quiet as ever you seen, barring an odd time when his temper would be riz, and, even with that, Molly says she never heard curse out of him — not what you'd call a proper curse. It was only this morning he said to her, 'Child, there's half-a-crown for you. Go and buy dolls and sweets,' he says, 'and leave me in peace by myself.' You wouldn't call that cursing?"

"I would not," said the Colonel. "I suppose she took the half-crown."

"She did, of course. Is it likely she'd vex him worse than he was vexed?"

"Was he vexed?"

"He was. Didn't I tell you he was? The two eyes were starting out of him with the rage he was in, and, with every look he took at Molly, he got worse instead of better."

"Did she go away?"

"She did not. She'd be in dread to do the like; for the doctor said he'd chastise her if ever she let the gentleman out of her sight, and the most of the time she was to be holding his hand, if, so be, he'd let her."

Colonel Beresford's curiosity was intensely excited by this account of Herbert Hatfield's dealings with Molly Geraghty. He made up his mind to call on Dr. Whitty and find out further details about the behaviour of the inebriate stranger. He was aware that he was acting in an undignified way by openly pursuing gossip which was not offered to him; but he consoled himself by reflecting that he had not much dignity to lose, and that, in any case, Dr. Whitty had

none. He found, as he expected, that the doctor was quite ready to talk freely.

"I'm sorry, Colonel," he said, "that I haven't been able to go up to see you, since poor Herbert arrived. I simply wasn't able to get away. Molly manages admirably and sticks to him like a leech; but, of course, I'm responsible. Herbert arrived here this day last week, a frightful wreck, face haggard, eyes sunken, hands shaking like what-do-call-'em leaves."

"Aspen?"

"Yes, aspen; that's what he said himself. Being a poet, he'd be bound to say something of the sort. I can't recollect ever having noticed an aspen leaf, but ——"

"The aspen tree, I believe, is the same thing as a poplar," said the Colonel. "But it doesn't grow in this part of the world."

"All I can say is that if its leaves are anything like poor Herbert's hands they can't be much use to it. His body was frightfully emaciated."

"Nose red?"

"No, pale grey. A nose doesn't get red except after a long course. Herbert, apparently, has only been really going it for about a year. Well, I gave him a bit of dinner, and, seeing the state he was in, offered him a bottle of porter. What do you think he said? He had the nerve to assure me that he never touched alcohol in any form. I call that rather a bad sign. I'd rather have a man who owned up frankly. However, I did not say anything, but, so soon as dinner was over, I introduced him to Molly, who was waiting in the hall. He didn't seem as much interested in her as I had hoped. However, he went for a walk and she followed him. The next day the trouble began."

"Ah! At Thady Glynn's, I suppose?"

"No. It's a curious instance of the crafty way

these poor fellows go about things; he didn't show the smallest wish to go near the town. He went down and sat on Michael Geraghty's pier and looked at the sea. Molly, of course, sat beside him. At first, he didn't take notice any of her; but, after a while, he inquired why she wasn't at school. From that on, he made a series of efforts to get rid of her. He tried walking fast, and even running, but Molly is an active child, so he didn't make much by that. Then he tried climbing up rocks and places, where he thought she wouldn't be able to follow him. He soon found out his mistake. A child of that age is an extraordinary good climber as a rule. Then, he fell back on the school idea and made his way up to Michael Geraghty's workshop. He had enquired, of course, from Molly who her father was. He didn't make much by that. Michael listened to all he had to say about the advantages of education for the young and duty of the parents. Then he told Herbert that Molly was half-witted and couldn't be taught anything, so there was no use sending her to school. Herbert apparently didn't believe that. He went off the next day to the schoolmaster and made further enquiries. The master, of course, was prepared to back up anything Michael had said, but somehow he took the matter up wrong. He thought it was Herbert Hatfield who had been accusing Molly of being half-witted and that Michael had been defending his daughter's reputation."

"I don't blame him," said the Colonel. "Nobody would expect a father to be giving away his own child like that to a perfect stranger."

"I dare say. Anyway, he said that Molly was the smartest girl he had and that the only reason she didn't go regularly to school was that her education was practically complete.

"That seems to have aroused Herbert's suspicions

worse than ever. He went straight up to the Presbytery and asked Father Henaghan to tell him the truth about Molly. Father Henaghan wanted to do the best he could to make things pleasant for Herbert, but didn't know what either Michael or the schoolmaster had told him. He said that, owing to an outbreak of measles among the other Geraghty children, he had strictly forbidden Molly to go to school, hoping in that way to prevent the spread of infection. Herbert then enquired for the school attendance officer."

"Thinking, I suppose, that we had compulsory education in this country?"

"Apparently. When he found out that there was no such person he gave up the idea of trying to get rid of Molly by sending her to school."

"What did he do next?"

"He threatened her with the police," said the doctor. "Molly was frightened at first, and told her father when she went home that night. Michael said she needn't mind, because, even if she was arrested, nothing would be done to her afterwards. He said that you were a magistrate and generally got your own way on the Bench, and that you wouldn't send any one to prison for following Herbert Hatfield about, because you were as keen as everybody else on having him properly watched."

"I wish he hadn't said that. I don't like being dragged into this business."

"It's all right," said the doctor. "Molly didn't tell Herbert what her father had said. She simply turned up smiling the next morning."

"Then he tried bribing her," said the Colonel. "Michael told me all about that."

"It will be very interesting to see what he does next, now that bribery has failed. In the meanwhile, the thing is working out splendidly. He hasn't, to my

knowledge, had a drop of any kind of drink, except water and tea, since he came here; and he's beginning to fatten already. His hands are not half as shaky as they were at first—— Hullo! Here he is."

A minute later Herbert Hatfield, having banged the hall door behind him, entered the room.

"Doctor Whitty," he said, "I must ask you for some explanation of the extraordinary way——"

"My friend, Colonel Beresford—Mr. Hatfield," said the doctor, performing the ceremony of introduction.

The Colonel and Herbert Hatfield bowed.

"Perhaps," said Herbert, "I could speak to you in private for a few minutes, if Colonel Beresford will excuse us."

"If it's Molly Geraghty you want to talk of," said the doctor, "there's not the least necessity for a private interview. The Colonel knows all about it and strongly approves——"

"No; I don't," said the Colonel.

"Of course you don't," said Herbert Hatfield. "No sane man——"

"Keep as calm as you can," said Dr. Whitty, "and tell us exactly what your grievance is."

"My grievance! I am followed about day and night——"

"Don't exaggerate," said Dr. Whitty. "She goes home at night."

"I'm followed about all day," said Herbert Hatfield "by a horrid little girl. There she is sitting on the window-sill wating for me."

Dr. Whitty glanced at Molly.

"She looks to me a nice little girl," he said. "She's quite pretty."

"I don't like her," said Herbert Hatfield; "and, even if I did like her, I shouldn't want to have her always treading on my heels."

"I'll tell her not to do that if you like."

"Tell her to go away and leave me at peace."

"No. I won't. You are here to be cured of a dangerous and highly objectionable kind of disease, and, in my opinion, Molly Geraghty is doing you a lot of good."

"She's making me worse. I'm going mad. I shall become a raving lunatic if she follows me about any more."

"Not at all. So long as you keep off the whisky, you'll be as sane as any man living."

"Whisky! I never touch whisky."

"Well, gin, or brandy, or rum, or absinthe, or whatever it is you do drink. I expect it's some queer, out-of-the-way foreign spirit."

"I tell you, I don't drink at all, and never did."

"Your father told me," said Dr. Whitty, "that you were a pretty nearly hopeless case of nervous breakdown. If that doesn't mean drink I don't know what it does mean."

"And do you mean to say that you've set that child on to follow me about in order to prevent my going into public-houses?"

"Exactly," said Dr. Whitty, "and, what's more, the treatment is doing you a lot of good. You couldn't have stood up to me and argued the way you're doing when you came here a week ago. Look at your hands now, man. Are they aspen leaves?"

Herbert Hatfield stretched out one of his hands and stared at it. Then he laughed suddenly.

"By Jove!" he said, "I believe you're right. It is doing me good. I slept last night too: the whole night."

"That's Molly Geraghty," said the doctor.

"All the same," said Herbert Hatfield, "I'm not a drunkard. I'm — it may seem rather absurd to you, but my nervous breakdown really was the consequence

of great mental strain. I am engaged in writing — surely my father must have told you that I am a poet.”

“If you prefer to call it poetry,” said Dr. Whitty, “I don’t mind. All I want to impress on you is that Molly Geraghty is the best means I know of getting you well again. So long as she is after you, you can’t give way ——”

“He means,” said the Colonel, “that she’ll keep your mind off poetry.”

“She certainly has done that,” said Herbert Hatfield.

“Then stick to her,” said the doctor, “or, rather, let her stick to you. And if I were you, I should allow her to hold your hands as you walk about.”

Herbert Hatfield stayed in Ballintra for six weeks. After he left, he sent Molly Geraghty a present of an immense doll’s house, fully furnished and crowded with inhabitants. Some months later Dr. Whitty made a confession to Colonel Beresford.

“Do you know,” he said, “that fellow, Herbert Hatfield, really was a teetotaler after all? I asked his father the question straight, when I was acknowledging his cheque.”

“And a poet?”

“I didn’t inquire. But I dare say he was. After all, there must have been something to account for the horrid state he was in when he arrived. If it wasn’t drink, it’s as likely to have been poetry as anything else.”

MRS. CHALLONER'S PUBLIC MEETING

“I DON'T think you've ever met my daughter, Mrs. Challoner,” said Colonel Beresford to Dr. Whitty one day near the end of October.

“No,” said the doctor, “I haven't. She hasn't been over in Ballintra since I've been in the place.”

“She very seldom pays me a visit,” said the colonel. “She's a good deal tied to London. Her husband is a barrister, and when he gets a holiday he likes to go abroad. However, it seems she's been working too hard lately, and has knocked herself up. She's coming over here for rest and quiet.”

“She'll get them both. I don't know anywhere with more quiet about it than Ballintra in the autumn.”

Dr. Whitty wondered what Mrs. Challoner worked at in London, but he was too well-mannered a man to ask a direct question.

“I dare say you've seen her name in the papers,” said the colonel. “It has been pretty prominent in the discussions about Women's Suffrage. She has taken the matter up, and, like all women, she's tremendously keen.”

Dr. Whitty had not seen her name. He seldom saw an English paper, and unless a woman makes herself very remarkable indeed, unless she gets imprisoned in circumstances of an entirely novel kind, the Irish papers take no notice of her.

“Of course I have,” said Dr. Whitty; “but I didn't think of her being your daughter.”

“I wish she wouldn't do it,” said the colonel. “It's too much for her. I quite agree with her view of the question, but I'd sooner she left the heavy end of the work to someone else.”

This surprised Dr. Whitty a good deal. He would not have suspected Colonel Beresford of being an advocate of Women's Suffrage.

"I don't know what your opinions on the subject are," said the colonel.

Dr. Whitty had no opinions. Woman's Suffrage is not a burning question in Connacht; he had never given it a moment's serious thought.

"I entirely agree with you and Mrs. Challoner," he said. "I don't see how any man, not actually blinded by prejudice, can take the other view."

"I'm glad to hear that, because I want to ask you up to dinner to meet my daughter when she arrives, but I couldn't do it if you had been likely to disagree with her. She's not a woman who tolerates any difference of opinion. She likes arguing, and arguments on that subject bore me."

"I don't want to argue," said the doctor. "I shall agree with every word she says, even if she goes further than I'm inclined to go myself."

"It's a pity she does it," said the colonel. "She's right, of course, in principle, but I can't help feeling a dislike for her making herself so prominent in public. Of course, not having any children, she naturally wants something to occupy her mind."

"You can't expect all women to have children," said the doctor tolerantly. "There'd be too many children in the world if they were all like Mrs. Michael Geraghty. She has thirteen."

Mrs. Challoner turned out to be a most charming lady. Her clothes in themselves excited the reverent admiration of Dr. Whitty. He had never in his life seen anything so fine as the black and green evening gown she wore at dinner. It glittered all over with little shiny discs which he discovered after were called sequins. Her figure was regal. She was at least four inches taller than the doctor, and looked quite as

tall as the colonel, who of late years stooped a little. She moved with a sumptuous grace which made it a pleasure to watch her cross the room. She had large flashing eyes, and a smile which made the doctor's heart beat rapidly. He fell a victim to her before he had been ten minutes in her company, and after he had taken her in to dinner he felt that Mr. Challoner, the barrister, was an exceedingly fortunate man.

The conversation turned at once on the question of Woman's Suffrage.

"I'm glad to hear, Dr. Whitty," said Mrs. Challoner, "that you take our view of the matter."

"I do, thoroughly."

"It seems such a pity that women should neglect to use the enormous influence for good they might have and ought to have."

"It is a pity. When I look round the women of this town, for instance, and think what a difference it would make if only ——"

"I like to think of woman," said Mrs. Challoner, "not as the rival of man, not as a competitor for the prizes of the market place, but as his comrade."

Dr. Whitty was a little puzzled. He had a vague idea that the advocates of Woman's Suffrage did want to be rivals and competitors.

"Quite so," he said. "Look at Mrs. Michael Geraghty, for instance——"

"I was thinking," said Mrs. Challoner, who generally interrupted anyone else who spoke, "of trying to do a little work among the women here now that I am over with them. I suppose there would be no difficulty about getting up a public meeting."

"My dear," said the colonel, alarmed, "do recollect that you have come over here for rest and quietness. It is absolutely necessary — I am sure Dr. Whitty will agree with me that you ought not to address a public meeting." He looked appealingly at the doctor.

Unfortunately Dr. Whitty, besides being exhilarated by the extraordinary beauty of Mrs. Challoner's eyes and smile, had drunk his first glass of champagne. He basely deserted the colonel.

"I don't think one meeting would do Mrs. Challoner any harm," he said.

"And besides," said the colonel, "you couldn't possibly get up a meeting of the sort in Ballintra. The people know nothing about the subject, and care less."

"That seems to me," said Mrs. Challoner with a radiant smile, "all the more reason for having a meeting. Don't you think so, Dr. Whitty?"

"Certainly. I should like to see a strong branch of your — your ——" (he did not feel quite certain whether Mrs. Challoner presided over a league, a guild, a union, an association or a simple society) "your organization established in Ballintra. Take the case of Mrs. Michael Geraghty. That poor woman ——"

"The priest won't like a meeting for women," said the colonel; "and you can't run a thing of the sort here without the priest."

"We'll try," said Mrs. Challoner, smiling again. "I have faced worse obstacles than that."

"The priest will be all right," said Dr. Whitty. "He's a reasonable man. If he's approached the right way and talked to sensibly he'll come to the meeting and make a speech."

"He ought to, of course," said Mrs. Challoner. "The Church has always taken a strong line on the subject. We count on the support of the clergy of every denomination wherever we go."

This surprised Dr. Whitty. He had always supposed that the ecclesiastical mind was prejudiced against the enfranchisement of anyone.

"Perhaps," said Mrs. Challoner, "you'll see the priest, Dr. Whitty, and talk to him. My doctor has

strictly forbidden me to undertake any work I can possibly avoid. Otherwise, of course, I should not dream of encroaching on your time."

"I will," said Dr. Whitty. "I'll see him tomorrow. I'll work the whole thing up for you. You'll want women and not men at the meeting?"

"Certainly. Get all the women you can. It's a woman's question, and it ought to be settled by women. I shall have a copy of our monster petition sent over from our London office, and, after the meeting, we can obtain the signatures of those present."

"Some of them can't write very well," said the doctor, "but we'll make their marks for them. Mrs. Michael Geraghty will come. So will Mrs. Thady Glynn and her eldest daughter, who's just home from school. You won't object to Mrs. Glynn, will you colonel?"

"I won't have *him*," said the colonel. "Remember that now, doctor. No tricks like that deputation one."

"Certainly not. You'll be quite safe. I won't have a man in the room except Father Henaghan, Mr. Jackson—you'd like to have him, of course, when you're having the priest—and myself. We don't count. Clergy and doctors occupy a sort of intermediate position between the two sexes. We're not really either one thing or the other."

Next day Dr. Whitty felt rather less confident about the success of his mission to the town of Ballintra. The daylight of an October morning is not a good tonic for a fading enthusiasm. Tea—breakfast tea—does not exhilarate as champagne does. Mrs. Challoner's eyes and smile were with him still, but only as a memory. Their radiance no longer made the world seem an easy thing to conquer. Nevertheless being a man of great hopefulness, he went out and called on the priest.

"Good morning, Father Henaghan. You know Mrs. Challoner, of course."

"Is that the colonel's daughter? I know the look of her, but I never spoke three words to her."

"She wants to get up a meeting in the town," said the doctor, "in favour of Woman's Suffrage. I suppose you won't have any objection to taking the chair?"

"A meeting in favour of what?"

"Woman's Suffrage, giving women votes, you know. It's a capital thing; the Church all over the world has pronounced in favour of it."

"I'll take the chair at no such meeting."

"I'm sorry to hear you say that," said the doctor. "By taking up that sort of reactionary attitude you will be throwing yourself into opposition to the great majority of the clergy. Mrs. Challoner told me last night that everywhere she went she had the support of the clergy."

"It's different in England. England's a Protestant country."

"She wasn't talking of England. She was talking of Ireland. Why, your own bishop is as strongly in favour of it as any man."

"What makes you say that? I never heard it of him."

"Mrs. Challoner told me so," said the doctor, lying boldly, "and she'd be sure to know."

"She's mistaken," said the priest. "The bishop has more sense."

"I don't see what harm it can do you to preside," said the doctor. "You may just as well do the civil thing when you're asked. We won't let it get into the papers."

"I'm against it," said the priest. "That's why I won't do it. In my opinion women are a deal better without votes."

"Of course they are. I quite agree with you."

"Then why should I be getting votes for them?"

"You won't, if you presided at fifty meetings. If you presided at one, once a week for five years, you wouldn't get a vote for a solitary woman at the end of it. Come now, Father Henaghan, it's a mere question of obliging a lady."

"What use would votes be to women if they had them?"

"None," said the doctor, "none whatever. They'd never use them. Votes aren't any use to men; so it's not likely they would be to women if they got them, which, of course, they won't."

"Then what's the good of the meeting?"

"The same good as all the other meetings. In fact, this one will be a great deal more good than most. For if you preside at it, like a sensible man, the colonel will be so pleased that he'll give you that field beyond my house for your new school. You want that field badly, you know you do."

"I have a great respect for the colonel," said the priest.

"Then you'll preside at the meeting. I knew you would."

"If I do," said the priest, "I'll not make a speech."

"You needn't. All that's necessary is for you to introduce Mrs. Challoner in a few well-chosen words, something about a charming and distinguished lady whose career has been watched with interest by the people of her native town."

"I know what to say," said the priest, "without your teaching me."

"You do, of course. Good-bye. Oh, by the way, Tuesday next is the day. Eight o'clock in the school-room."

Dr. Whitty had much less difficulty at the rectory.

He saw Mrs. Jackson first. She was a lady with leanings towards culture, and an unsatisfied desire for what she thought of as a "fuller life." She was greatly interested in hearing that Mrs. Challoner was an ardent advocate of Woman's Suffrage. It appeared to her from the short sketch the doctor gave her of the objects of the movement that it was just the thing she had always been looking out for, something that would lift her soul out of the dreary monotony of house cleaning and baby culture. She promised to use her influence to persuade her husband to attend the meeting. She went to the door of the room and called him in a loud voice until he came.

Mr. Jackson held no strong views on any political subject except temperance. About that he was violent and extreme. He wanted a Bill passed forbidding the sale of alcohol in any form, except in chemists' shops on presentation of a written order from a medical man. Dr. Whitty knew this and shaped his arguments to suit the circumstances.

"In Finland," he said, "the effect of the women's vote—you know, of course, that women have votes in Finland—has been to close every public-house in the entire country, and to make the manufacture of whisky a criminal offence."

Mr. Jackson, though his favourite study was temperance legislation, had never heard of the drastic action of the Finnish Parliament. He expressed surprise.

"I'm not telling you that on my own authority," said the doctor; "in fact, I never heard it until Mrs. Challoner mentioned it to me last night at dinner. But she ought to know. She's gone into all these questions thoroughly. Her husband, as you know, is an international lawyer, makes speeches at The Hague Conference, sits on Boards of Arbitration, and that kind of thing."

"I suppose she's right," said Mr. Jackson, "but I never heard of it."

"That being so," said Dr. Whitty, "you will of course support this Suffrage movement. What we want you to do is to open the meeting by proposing that Father Henaghan takes the chair. Quite a short speech will do. You needn't say much about the question itself. Mrs. Challoner will have all the arguments ready cut and dried when her turn comes. All you have to do is to be sympathetic in a general way. You could mention, if you like, that the hand which rocks the cradle ought to rule the world; or any other little thing of that kind that occurred to you. You'll know, better than I can, what the proper thing is."

Mrs. Jackson added her voice to Dr. Whitty's, and the rector allowed himself to be persuaded. When the doctor had left the house, he wrote to the secretary of the Total Abstinence Society to which he belonged for all the pamphlets in existence which dealt with the temperance question in Finland.

Dr. Whitty walked up towards Ballintra House, intending to report his success to Mrs. Challoner. On the way he met Michael Geraghty, who, pursuing his profession of builder and contractor, was erecting a new cow byre for a farmer near the village.

"Look here, Michael," said the doctor, "I want your wife to attend a meeting in the schoolroom at eight o'clock on Tuesday next."

"Herself might go," said Michael. "But she has her hands full with the baby. I'm not sure that she'll be able."

"The baby's a girl, isn't it?" said the doctor.

"It is. It's the tenth girl."

"Then tell her to bring it. I couldn't have asked it if it had been a boy. Be sure now, Michael, you don't forget to tell her. I can't be running round the town inviting everybody twice."

"Doctor," called Michael Geraghty, as Whitty left him. "Did you say it was the preventing of consumption the meeting was for?"

"No, it's not."

"Then it'll be dairying, or cookery, maybe?"

"No. It's not. It's Woman's Suffrage."

"It'll be all the same to herself," said Michael Geraghty. "Only it would be as well for her to be told, so as she'd know what to be expecting. I'll give her the message."

The day of the meeting arrived. So soon as the children had gone home, Dr. Whitty took possession of the schoolroom. He swept it out with a brush he borrowed from the schoolmaster's wife, working vigorously but not very effectively. He disturbed a great deal of dirt, but got very little of it out of the door. He arranged the forms and desks in rows, so that the audience would be obliged to face the speakers. He put the schoolmaster's kitchen table at the top of the room and covered it with a green cloth which came from his own dining-room. He placed two vases full of roses, supplied by Colonel Beresford's gardener, on the table, got a pen, a bottle of ink, and a sheet of blotting-paper. Then he went home and had something to eat. At half-past seven he got back to the schoolroom. At twenty-five minutes to eight Mrs. Michael Geraghty came in. Dr. Whitty, who was anxious about the size of the audience, welcomed her heartily.

"I ran round," she said, "to tell you that I couldn't attend the meeting. The baby's that cross I couldn't bring her, for fear she'd be disturbing the people with her crying, and I daren't leave her."

"You'll stay here, now you are here," said the doctor.

"Where's the use?" she said. "I heard all they had to say about domestic economy, or whatever it is

they call it, the last meeting there was in it. What's more, I didn't think much of it."

"This isn't domestic economy. It's Woman's Suffrage. And you've got to stay."

"I'd do a deal for you, doctor, but the baby ——"

"Sit down now and don't talk. Here's somebody else."

It was Thady Glynn's daughter, very sumptuously arrayed in a blue dress. Her hat was magnificent. She apologised for her mother's absence. Four more women dribbled in after her, and gathered in a close group round Mrs. Michael Geraghty. Miss Glynn sat on the front bench by herself. There was a noise of wheels. Dr. Whitty rushed to the door, fearing that Mrs. Challoner might have arrived before her time. He was met by six women, four of them female servants from Ballintra House; the fifth Mrs. Challoner's own maid, whose opinions on the subject of the suffrage were probably formed; the sixth, the coachman's wife. They took their places in a prim row on the back bench, and sat very much as they did in the great hall of Ballintra House while the colonel read prayers in the morning. At ten minutes to eight Mr. and Mrs. Jackson arrived. Dr. Whitty placed Mr. Jackson on one of the chairs behind the table, and arranged Mrs. Jackson at a decent distance from Miss Glynn on the front bench. Father Henaghan came next. He looked round the audience and grinned.

"You haven't got very many people," he said.

"I have not," said the doctor. "It got out some way that you didn't approve of the meeting, and so they wouldn't come. I shouldn't be surprised if the colonel refused to give you that field after all."

The priest had something to say in reply, but the arrival of Mrs. Challoner prevented his saying it. She, too, glanced at the empty benches, but she had

the grace to conceal her disappointment. Dr. Whitty placed her in a chair beside Mr. Jackson. The schoolmaster's wife arrived immediately after Mrs. Challoner, and sat by herself in front of the Ballintra House servants. Dr. Whitty crossed the room and whispered to Mr. Jackson. The rector rose nervously.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said, "I have much pleasure in proposing that Father Henaghan take the chair. I shall not detain you with any remarks of my own on a subject about which I hope to know more when I leave this room than I do at present. But I think I ought to say that, in so far as Woman's Suffrage promotes the cause of temperance throughout the world, it has my sincerest sympathy."

Dr. Whitty applauded this sentiment vigorously. It struck him that Mrs. Challoner did not look very pleased, and he wished that Mr. Jackson would express himself more warmly. It seemed a pity to rest his support of the Suffrage movement entirely on temperance. He sincerely hoped that no mention would be made of the remarkable achievement of the women of Finland. Mr. Jackson did not say much more, but he succeeded, to Dr. Whitty's gratification, in working in the proverb about rocking the cradle and ruling the world.

Father Henaghan took the chair amid loud applause from Dr. Whitty, backed by the tapping of the schoolmistress' umbrella on the floor. The priest began his speech by saying that he was glad to have the opportunity of welcoming to their midst a lady whose brilliant and striking career had long been watched with deep interest and unfailing admiration by the people of Ballintra. The sentence was so well rounded and delivered with such fervour that it was applauded by several members of the audience as well as by Dr. Whitty and the schoolmaster's wife. Mrs. Challoner's

face cleared. She evidently liked the priest's speech, so far, better than she had liked the rector's.

"I'm sorry," Father Henaghan went on, "that we haven't a better room in which to welcome the lady who has come to address us. This school isn't what it ought to be, but there's talk of building a new one, more suited to the needs of the parish, and more appropriate to the accommodation of meetings of this sort. I think I may say that if we had a suitable site we wouldn't be long in getting together the money for the building."

He glanced round at Mrs. Challoner to see how she was taking the hint. She smiled and nodded in the most encouraging manner. Father Henaghan felt he might complete the impression he had evidently made on her by a few judicious words on the subject of Female Suffrage.

"With regard to the cause which we have assembled here to support," he said, "it wouldn't suit me to be saying too much. I'm a man myself, and in my opinion it's women who ought to look into the matter. I haven't what you call a strong opinion either one way or the other."

The schoolmaster's wife applauded feebly with her umbrella. Mrs. Michael Geraghty, noticing that the doctor was looking the other way, slipped as quietly as possible from the room. She was really anxious about her baby. Mrs. Challoner appeared puzzled and slightly annoyed. Dr. Whitty winked ferociously at Father Henaghan. He was watching Mrs. Challoner's face, and he didn't like the look of it. The priest glanced round quickly and saw the incipient frown which had aroused Dr. Whitty's alarm. He felt he must improve on his non-committal attitude.

"I haven't," he said, "what you'd call a strong opinion, but I may tell you this; if I had an opinion, it would be entirely in favour of Woman's Suffrage;

and what's more, if any one among you wants a good argument in favour of women being given the right to vote, let him look at Mrs. Challoner. I defy any man to doubt that if she had a vote she'd use it well."

After this effort he felt he could do no more. He called upon Mrs. Challoner to address the meeting and sat down.

Mrs. Challoner stood up, and there was no doubt she was in an uncommonly bad temper. Dr. Whitty was anxious and puzzled. The servants from Ballintra House fidgeted nervously.

"I came here to-night," she began, "under the impression that I was to address a meeting of opponents to the monstrous and ridiculous demand for Votes for Women. I find I was mistaken. The two clergymen who addressed you appear to be in favour of what I regard as the degradation of my sex."

Mr. Jackson, who had not paid much attention to Father Henaghan's speech, woke up with a start and looked surprised. Father Henaghan glared savagely at Dr. Whitty.

"In the circumstances," said Mrs. Challoner, "I am thankful to observe that this is an extremely small meeting, and apparently quite wanting in enthusiasm. I am glad of it. The other women — those who are not present — have shown good taste and sound sense in staying away. I do not know that I ought to address you at all to-night, but I shall say a few words in the hope that I may convince some of the least obstinate among you of the folly of the course you are bent on pursuing."

Her eyes were fixed as she spoke on Colonel Beresford's under housemaid. The poor girl trembled visibly. Mrs. Challoner then denounced all supporters of Women's Suffrage, especially those whom she called the "Male Suffragettes." Her speech lasted for more than half an hour. She repeated with con-

temptuous emphasis a large number of witticisms which had appeared in comic papers. She quoted, though without reference to the original documents, a good many articles from London daily papers. She explained that she was a leading member of an organisation of right-minded women pledged to resist to the uttermost the demands of infatuated members of their sex. She produced at last a copy of a petition to Parliament. It asked, so she informed her audience, that the suffrage should never, under any pressure, be granted to women.

"I do not suppose," she said, "that more than one or two of those present will sign it." She glanced, as she spoke, at her own maid, who had signed twice before, "but I mean to take it round the town tomorrow myself and obtain the signatures of those who have had the good sense not to attend this meeting."

She sat down. Father Henaghan, a little redder in the face than usual, but with a twinkle in his eye, called upon Dr. Whitty to propose a vote of thanks to Mrs. Challoner. The doctor rose without exhibiting any very obvious embarrassment.

"Reverend chairman, ladies, and gentlemen," he said. "I came here to-night a convinced and determined supporter of Woman's Suffrage. So did the Reverend Mr. Jackson, so did Father Henaghan ——"

"I did not," exclaimed the priest.

Mr. Jackson, who seemed a good deal bewildered, shook his head.

"You did," said the doctor, "both of you. And there's no use your denying it, because you committed yourselves in the speeches you made. But it's open to you, as it is to me, to change your views; and I may say that, after listening to the extraordinarily powerful and convincing speech just made by Mrs. Challoner, I have changed my mind. The ladies who have attended the meeting have also, I feel certain, changed

theirs. That is the best compliment we can pay Mrs. Challoner to-night, and by way of showing that it's not a mere empty form of words, I propose that every one here signs the petition which has been laid on the table before the chairman."

He sat down. Father Henaghan rose at once.

"Ladies," he said, "let each one of you step forward and sign the petition, and let nobody leave the room till that's done."

"I don't want people to sign against their will," said Mrs. Challoner. "If there's any woman here who sincerely believes ——"

"There isn't," said Father Henaghan.

"There is not," said the doctor with emphasis. "I know them all well, and there isn't one that sincerely believes votes would be the slightest use to her, if she had them given out free by the stone, the same as the Congested Districts Board would give potatoes."

The petition was signed. Mrs. Challoner, who went back to London early in November, parted with Dr. Whitty on terms of the warmest friendship. She afterwards spoke of him as a singularly open-minded man, one of the very few who are ready to surrender an opinion when it is clearly shown to be wrong.

THE END

NOV 20 1912

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 001 268 331 5

